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INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2499  
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2622  
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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1891  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 2246  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2671  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 5099  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1766  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 001127

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. WALCH  
DRL FOR N. WILETT  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS  
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/16/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)  
SUBJECT: MUGABE CONSIDERS ELECTIONS; NO END TO POLITICAL  
STALEMATE IN SIGHT

REF: A. HARARE 1100  
[1](#)B. HARARE 1117

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Katherine Dhanani for reason 1.4  
(d)

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (SBU) President Mugabe and senior ZANU-PF officials have made several recent references to holding new elections to settle the political stalemate in Zimbabwe. ZANU-PF may view elections as an opportunity to retake all the levers of government, while the MDC fears a new wave of pre-election violence similar to that which occurred prior to the June 2008 presidential run-off. The gazetting of Amendment 19 and ZANU-PF's calls for elections appear to be an attempt to pressure the MDC into entering a power-sharing government.  
END SUMMARY.

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Amendment 19  
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[1](#)2. (U) On December 12, the MDC national council resolved inter alia that it would not finalize a power-sharing agreement and enter government absent 1) equitable distribution of ministerial portfolios and governorships; 2) agreement on composition and functions of the national security council; and 3) enactment of Amendment 19. The MDC also demanded that Mbeki be replaced as facilitator and that executive decisions (such as the reappointment of central bank governor Gono) in violation of the Memorandum of Understanding and September agreement be reversed. The resolution states that the MDC is committed to the SADC dialogue; it also states that in the event of continued political impasse, a transitional government should be established and a "people-driven" constitution drafted as a prelude to new, internationally supervised elections. MDC's

Tendai Biti told us that the MDC is basically paying lip service to dialogue; its real goal is internationally supervised elections (Ref B).

¶3. (U) On December 13, the GOZ gazetted (officially published) Amendment 19. (NOTE: The September 15 agreement, signed by the principals, contains three provisions different from the agreed-upon September 11 document. Amendment 19 as gazetted contains the September 11 provisions supported by the MDC. END NOTE.) By law, Amendment 19 will be open for public comment for 30 days. At that time a first "reading" will take place and debate can begin. Therefore, the earliest date a vote could take place would be January 13 (there is no legal provision to dispense with the 30-day period). There is no time period within which a vote must be held.

¶4. (C) As of today, MDC president Tsvangirai is still in Botswana. There are no plans for meetings to resolve the outstanding issues.

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Mugabe and ZANU-PF Considering New Elections  
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¶5. (U) In several public statements, President Mugabe and ZANU-PF leaders appeared to be considering holding new elections to determine Zimbabwe's political future. In a December 11 speech, while discussing possible foreign intervention, Mugabe said, "Let's settle things here. We can

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go to an election if elections are desirable and the people are the deciders and we will never reject their verdict." This was followed by ZANU-PF chief negotiator Patrick Chinamasa telling state media on December 15 that refusal of the MDC to pass Amendment 19 in Parliament would mean an end to negotiations on a government of national unity and would result in new presidential, parliamentary, and local elections.

¶6. (SBU) Political analyst Eldred Masunungure told us on December 12 that if harmonized elections were generally free and fair, ZANU-PF would be swept out of power. This perception has led to concern by the MDC of a wave of violence preceding new elections similar to what happened in the months leading up to the June 2008 run-off election. The MDC is also pointing to the abductions of approximately 19 of its supporters since late October (Ref A) as indications the regime will use intimidation and violence to regain governmental authority. Four of the abductees were MDC candidates who lost in the parliamentary March 29 elections, but would be expected to run again in new elections. Other abductees included party organizers and employees of the human rights watch dog group, Zimbabwe Peace Project.

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Complete Elections or Just Presidential?  
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¶7. (SBU) In the event of new elections, ZANU-PF would seek to hold new presidential, parliamentary, and local polls. This would create an opportunity for them to regain control of Parliament and potentially retake many local councils that were lost to the MDC. Constitutional Amendment 17 stipulated that for the March 29, 2008 elections, as well as going forward, all three elections would be held in unison. The MDC opposes this position and argues that only the presidential results were inconclusive. MDC spokesperson Nelson Chamisa said, "What is in dispute is the position of the President. Mugabe cannot drag the whole country into harmonized elections because he lost." (NOTE: ZANU-PF currently controls 97 seats in the House of Assembly to the MDC-T's 99. MDC-M has 10 seats and there are four vacancies. END NOTE.)

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COMMENT  
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18. (C) Mugabe recognizes that ZANU-PF cannot effectively govern alone. ZANU-PF's threat to call elections, like its gazetting of Amendment 19, is an effort to put pressure on the MDC to enter government under an agreement that would give ZANU-PF the balance of power. So far the MDC is not biting. Its national council on December 12 made clear that it will not approve Amendment 19 in Parliament absent agreement on the outstanding issues of equitable distribution of ministerial positions and governorships, and composition and duties of the national security council.

19. (C) We believe it unlikely Mugabe will call elections. The MDC will not participate in elections without guarantees at the outset of international supervision and monitoring; Mugabe knows that a relatively fair playing field created by international oversight would result in an MDC victory. To call elections without MDC participation would risk the condemnation of SADC and would not advance the prospects of the legitimacy that Mugabe craves.

10. (C) There are hardliners in both ZANU-PF and the MDC that do not want a power-sharing agreement. It remains to be

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seen whether compromises are possible that will resolve the impasse. As of now, we see no evidence of this. The public outcry in the last couple of weeks for Mugabe to step down would only seem to strengthen the position of MDC hardliners like Tendai Biti (Ref B) who do not want to share government with ZANU-PF. All of this points to a continued political stalemate with no clear solution in sight. END COMMENT.

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